

NEW JERSEY COLLEGES:



Students on steps of East Hall chat between classes. Many countries and every state in the Union are represented among undergraduates.

**COVER
PHOTO**

Students of Westminster Choir College grouped before the figure of the Infant of Bethlehem in theme portraying "O Come, All Ye Faithful."

MINISTRY of MUSIC

*Westminster Choir College, Princeton's
Other Campus, Links Many Races and Creeds
in Many Lands Through Sacred Music*

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

ON Christmas Day, perhaps more than at any other time, Westminster Choir College of Princeton finds joyous meaning breathed into its motto: Spectemur Agendo — "Let us be judged by our deeds."

This is the day when a half-million voices directly trained by Westminster graduates sing in praise of the Infant of Bethlehem. As Christmas Day starts in mid-Pacific and moves westward around the world, Westminster-led voices greet the day and pass it on—in Manila, in Tokyo, in Seoul, in Delhi, in the Holy Land, in Paris, in London, in New York and in hundreds of churches across America.

This is the "ministry of music" which Westminster Choir College

terian connotations, yet Westminster Choir College is not Presbyterian nor is it Protestant—and, incidentally, is not connected with Princeton University. John Finley Williamson, founder of the college and its president and inspiration ever since, emphasizes that Westminster is "not a nondenominational college; it is interdenominational." Thus Protestants, Catholics and Jews are found in the student body; the college teaches not the music of one religion but the method of expressing any religion through music.

By any name, however, the work of this Princeton college sounds sweet to the ears of those who know music. This year 1,500 high school graduates

This is the sixth of a series of articles which not only describe New Jersey's colleges and universities, but tell the story of the growth and traditions of individual colleges within the state, picture their roles in modern education and explain how they plan to meet what has been called "an impending tide of students."

Next Sunday: Panzer College.

quietly proclaims as its reason for being. Today, because of this New Jersey college, sacred music more than ever links many races and many creeds in many lands. True, this is a year-around Westminster aim, but it seems most avidly alive at Christmas time, as, of course, do all aspects of Christianity.

A half-million voices is no idle boast. If anything, it quite probably errs much on the side of understatement. Westminster, now in its 30th year, has graduated 1,000 young men and women. Some of these are in small churches or in small public schools, yet more than 100 others are now teaching Westminster methods in colleges and seminaries. Some others direct large city programs for as many as 20,000 persons.

WESTMINSTER certainly is one of America's more unusual colleges. Nevertheless, its singleness of purpose—to train its graduates to "enrich the lives of others through the ministry of music"—makes it at once little known locally and yet internationally famed in world music circles.

"Westminster" is a misleading name. The word has strongly Presby-

terian connotations, yet Westminster Choir College is not Presbyterian nor is it Protestant—and, incidentally, is not connected with Princeton University. Music fills the air—the music of a single voice working down to deepest register, the music of 200 voices blended in massive song, the music of an orchestra or a piano or an organ. Usually it is all of these, and more—even unto 2 a.m., when eager students have been known to sign up for organ practice.

THERE is no mistaking what goes on in Westminster's four brick Georgian colonial buildings clustered in a quadrangle across town from Princeton University. Music fills the air—the music of a single voice working down to deepest register, the music of 200 voices blended in massive song, the music of an orchestra or a piano or an organ. Usually it is all of these, and more—even unto 2 a.m., when eager students have been known to sign up for organ practice.

Music, obviously, is the all-enveloping base on which Westminster rests but for an undergraduate it serves as a point of departure. It is not enough for a Westminster graduate to know music. Westminster strives to teach the art of serving others through music.

That means sending graduates out into churches or schools or missions or community-sponsored programs to teach whomever they encounter to



Westminster Choir rehearsal finds Dr. John Finley Williamson, college founder and president (right), directing the 40-voice group.

RIGHT: Representative of the world-wide registration of students at Westminster Choir College are (from left): Rita Padilla, Puerto Rico; Pablo Sosa, Argentina; Maria Louise Moser, Switzerland; Mie Osigo, Japan; Theodore White, Princeton, and Ernest Brown, Alaska.

sing in harmony. For a student, and the 38-member faculty, that involves many things.

It involves strict training in non-musical subjects—in English, history, dramatics, psychology, languages and so on. It involves recognizing that Westminster graduates, for all their own personal talent, must “work with what they find” in the world outside. There can be no room for either the petulance or the turbulence sometimes associated with those talented in the arts.

Always in every class, whether it be musical or nonmusical, there is a

never-ending underscoring of personal discipline. That means discipline in dress, in manners, in personal habits. There is a full awareness on the part of both faculty and student body that Westminster graduates will be church and community leaders. Every day is preparation for the future.

THE sense of discipline comes home with stunning impact at a rehearsal of one of the several campus choirs. It comes in watching small segments of the Chapel Choir (made up of freshmen and transfer students). It comes in watching the intentness of the Sym-

phonic Choir or Graduate Choir rehearsals.

Above all is the tight discipline inherent in rehearsals of the 40-voice Westminster Choir, the choir whose annual nationwide and occasional European tours are known wherever lovers of music gather.

Dr. Williamson conducts the Westminster Choir himself. Each year the choir is selected anew; there is no higher campus honor than making the choir. Yet Dr. Williamson knows that he must never let anyone forget that discipline and concentration are the two elements which combine with in-

dividual voices to make the choir far, far greater than the sum total of the individual voices.

Watching the Westminster Choir rehearse, a visitor sees a oneness between conductor Williamson and his students that is almost uncannily intense. “Are you aware of that concentration, Dr. Williamson?” a visitor asks. “No,” he replies, “I would only be aware if the concentration faltered.”

WESTMINSTER has no football teams or no organized athletics of any kind; there just isn’t time for inter-collegiate athletics, even though Dr. Williamson is a sports fan (“the kind of football fan who even sits out in the rain”). He plans some day to build on campus a “health institute” (gymnasium) where every student will have an individual program of athletics or exercises suited to his own physique and temperament.

Bounding good health is important for a Westminster student. There have been times when five or six members of a choir have collapsed during a performance. One former football player last year told Dr. Williamson that “in all my years of football I never had so much physical agony as singing in that choir.” That Westminster graduate is today teaching music in a large Southern university—and coaching the passers on the football team.

Dr. Williamson likes to call the Westminster Choir “our football team.” Although strictly an extracur-

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LEFT: Westminster's Administration building at Princeton viewed from the main drive.

WESTMINSTER CHOIR COLLEGE



Meeting in hall brings about informal discussion of school program between undergraduates and "Dr. Jack" and "Dr. Rhea" Williamson. RIGHT: View of chapel from entranceway to Administration building.

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ricular activity, it is the heart of the campus life. Everything revolves about the choir—throats choke up and eyes fill with tears when names of the new choir are announced. School stops when the choir leaves on tour and the entire school gathers when the choir returns, even in the middle of the night.

THERE is even more reason on campus to regard the Westminster Choir with deepest sentiment: The college is a direct outgrowth of the choir, and that transfers attention back to 1920 when young Jack Williamson of Dayton, Ohio, advertised for volunteers to make up a choir. When he became director of music at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Dayton soon after, his personal choir went along with him.

Dr. Williamson took his Westminster Choir on tour in 1922, with results far beyond even his finest dreams. The choir received astounding critical notices, drew 9,000 people to a St. Louis concert and stopped traffic outside for close to an hour. Mrs. H. E. Talbott, an Ohio patron of music, sponsored the choir (and later, in 1929 and 1934, helped it make tours through Europe).

As the choir grew in stature requests began to pour into Dr. Williamson to supply leaders to train church groups in other cities. Mrs. Rhea Williamson, his wife and college dean, recalls those days:

"We just had to start to get choir leaders trained. The churches needed our leaders; people were getting tired of paid quartets putting on shows in church. They wanted their own choirs."

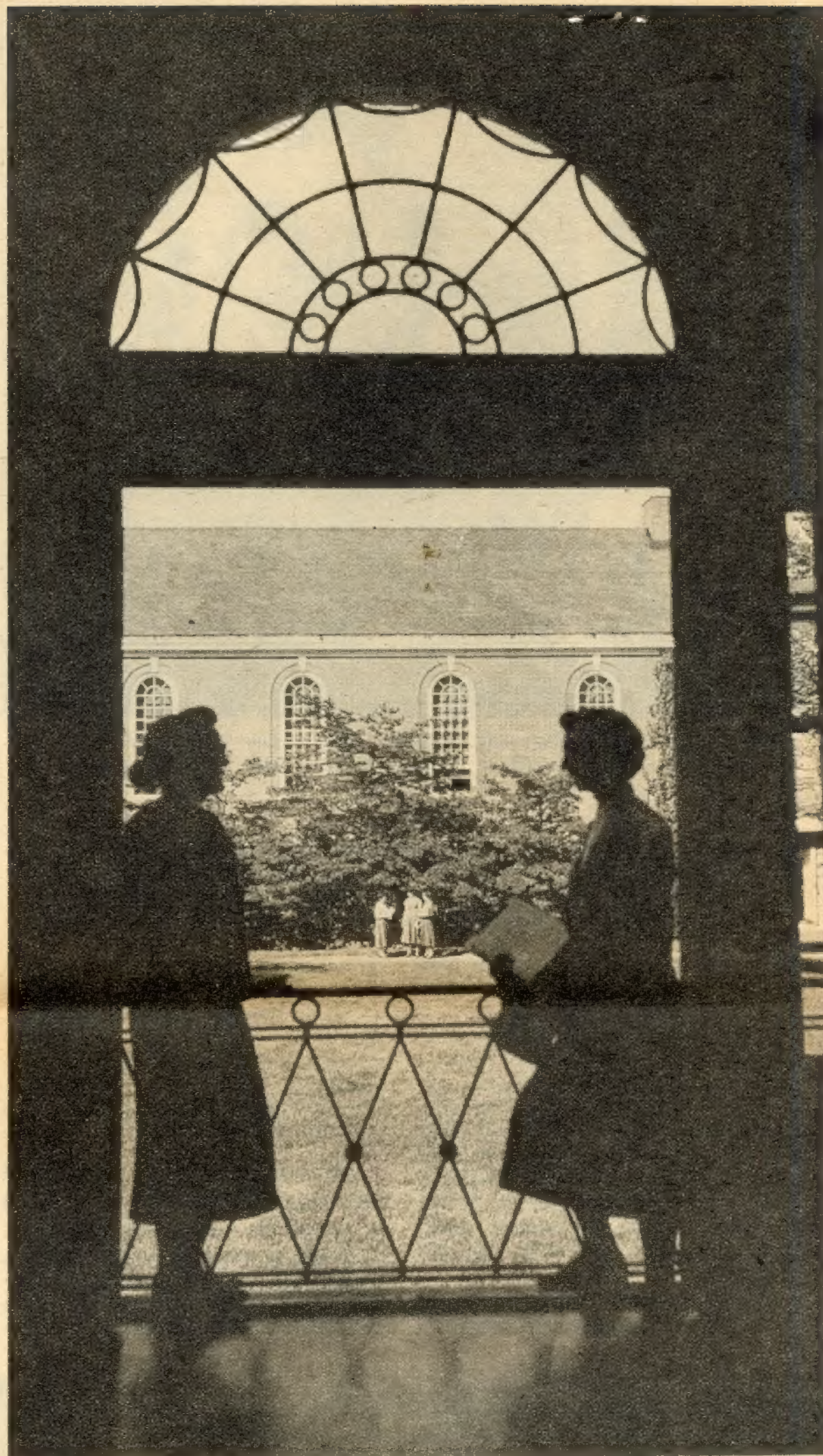
In 1926 Jack and Rhea Williamson founded their college in Dayton. Soon after they moved to Ithaca, N.Y., where Westminster Choir College became fully accredited. But Dr. Williamson longed to be near the musical climate of both Philadelphia and New York. He wanted Westminster Choir College "to be to the church what the Philharmonic is to symphonic music and what the Metropolitan is to opera."

ACCORDINGLY, Westminster Choir College moved in 1932 to Princeton, midway between New York and Philadelphia. The location has proved perfect in many ways, including the opportunity for the choir to sing more than 100 times with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. Still, the beginnings were meager, with students living in a rented house and classes being conducted in a church.

Again, however, the Westminster Choir led a benefactor to the Williamson doorstep, when in 1933 Mrs. J. Livingston Taylor heard the choir and told the Williamsons she wanted to provide \$350,000 for a campus.

Mrs. Taylor bought 20 of the 40 acres where the college now stands. Work began on the quadrangle comprising the administration building (reminiscent in design of Philadelphia's Independence Hall), two dormitories and the chapel-commons building. Few Westminster Choir College students saw the progress; the choir was touring Europe.

On the day the choir returned Westminster Choir College moved to the new campus. Only three buildings have been added since, all converted from war surplus structures—a large quonset-type playhouse, a dormitory



for men and the library. This fall ground was broken for a new dormitory. A library is on the immediate drawing board and the health institute is in the near offing.

WESTMINSTER Choir College is growing, as it must. The demand for her graduates increases, since one successful placement can bring 10 or a dozen new requests. The college can't expect to expand enrollment too much—probably never to more than 400 to 500—lest the intimacy and tight discipline be lost.

Tight discipline and intense concentration on matters of music might tend to make one who has never been to Westminster feel the choir college's students are different from ordinary

college men and women. They aren't, except possible to know how they've dedicated their lives.

Westminster emphasizes one undergraduate rule: No drinking or smoking. This involves no prudishness; it is mere common sense. Students are told: "Alcohol and tobacco are damaging to the voice; avoid anything which can possibly hurt your voice." It's as simple as warning basketball players not to step in bear traps.

There is one other strict rule: "Absolutely no cutting of class. The reason—the student, in justice to himself, can't afford to miss any class." On many campuses this would have the student editors frothing at their typewriters; at Westminster it occasions no raising of the voice whatsoever.



Chapel Choir on way to concert engagement by bus. Activities of choral groups help prepare students for eligibility in Westminster Choir or "varsity squad" being tendered typical homecoming (below).



Westminster's chief overtone is an infectious friendliness, and it stems from the top. "Dr. Jack" and "Dr. Rhea," as they are known to the students, are in spirit and temperament the same Williamsons who combined Jack's musical talents and Rhea's academic and administrative talents almost 30 years ago to found the college of their hearts.

Dr. Jack, as president of the college, is both warmest friend and sharpest critic of students. He knows every student by name and can recount the names and accomplishments of nearly every graduate. Westminster Choir College has never ceased being for him "one big family." Dr. Rhea is dean, registrar and head of the academic department (where her daughter, Mrs. Delight Holt, teaches).

THE Williamsons continue to pass personal approval on every student admitted. Dr. Rhea makes sure high school credits are in order and that students have the enthusiasm for the long academic pull they face. Dr. Jack puts an applicant through his musical paces; every student admitted must have high musical potential—plus the willingness and the personality to devote himself through music to the lives of others.

Westminster Choir College has no endowment and no scholarships, yet students have one unusual work opportunity—the chance to work in nearby churches as weekend "ministers of music." Nearly 90 students now take advantage of the chance to gain both experience for their life



Dr. Alexander McCurdy familiarizes class in keyboard of organ, one of three broad aspects in curriculum. Thus, a student who elects organ or piano must also learn choral work which includes conducting.

work and help in financing their way toward a bachelor of music or master of music degree, or both.

The school comes to a virtual shutdown at Friday noon, to permit the weekend musical directors to leave for a variety of churches ranging from a Catholic church in Trenton to a Protestant church in Middletown, N.Y., and others within about a 90-mile arc. Churches pay directly to Westminster (about \$80,000 this year) and sums earned are deducted from the individual students' bills.

Westminster Choir College now emphasizes three broad aspects in its curriculum—voice, conducting, and organ or piano. A student who elects voice must also have proficiency on a keyboard, and a student who elects organ or piano also must learn choral work. There is plenty of opportunity for developing individual talent as a singer or as an organist, but the college principle is firm: To train "ministers of music" who will use their talents to teach others the sacredness of church music.

Dr. Rhea carefully points this out to every applicant. She tells them: "We want our graduates to be outgoing, to do service to others through music." Yet Westminster trains individual talent, too, and occasionally that manifests itself.

THERE comes quickly to mind Westminster graduates who have made names through their individual talents—such as Dorothy Maynor, the respected Negro singer, and Calvin Marsh, who in his first year at the Metropolitan last year sang 13 different roles.

But for every individual singing or composing star there are a hundred

other graduates seriously ministering to voices of all ages. Here are a few, selected merely to show the variety of their worth: John A. Davis Jr., organist and choir director at West Point; Elaine Brown, head of choral music at Temple University and director of Philadelphia's "Singing City"; Wilfred Bain, head of the music department at Indiana University; Thomas Hilbush, director of music in Princeton High School; Carlton Martin, head of music in a Los Angeles church and also director of 20,000 voices in other Los Angeles city choirs, and Herbert Hoffman, founder of Columbus Boy-choir School, now nearby in Princeton.

Individual accomplishments are considered at Westminster as links in a chain. The college emphasizes the need to be cosmopolitan and bars no student because of religion, nationality or race. Its undergraduates come from every state in the Union, from many foreign countries.

IN carrying out its "ministry of music" in foreign lands, Westminster Choir College prefers to train native students to use Westminster methods in their own lands. Native students can work within the framework of their own languages, through the personal beliefs of their countrymen and with the musical instruments of their own lands.

Westminster's graduates have been called "ambassadors of music" and they have been called the "voice of America." And, as they direct native choirs at Christmastime in "The Messiah" in this country, in Korea, Japan, India and the Philippines (as they have done this year), they might well be called the "rising voice of the world."

Next Sunday: Panzer College.